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## L.A. to Help Fund 'Maglev' Train Study

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Planning for a high-speed rail system in Southern California moved forward Tuesday when the Los Angeles City Council agreed to help pay for the study of a magnet-powered train connecting the Westside and Ontario International Airport.

The council agreed unanimously to spend \$643,000 to study the feasibility and environmental effect of a 50-mile train line run by a largely untested magnetic levitation system.

"For a long time now, other cities in the region have been saying Los Angeles is not doing its part to help solve all of our congestion problems," Councilman Antonio Villaraigosa said. "This puts Los Angeles at the front of the line in that effort."

The Southern California Assn. of Governments, which proposed the "maglev" train, wants it to run from the Westside — a specific terminus has not been chosen — to the Ontario airport, with stops at Union Station and West Covina.

SCAG says the system, estimated to cost about \$5 billion, would boost the region's aviation capabilities by eventually giving passengers quick access to Los Angeles International, a growing Ontario airport and a proposed airport in Palmdale.

SCAG planners say the first leg would be built with funding from private investors. They envision it as following the Santa Monica and San Bernardino freeways, reaching top speeds of nearly 250 mph and making the trip in about 30 minutes. Future extensions could take the train

to LAX, Palmdale and Orange County.

Washington has pledged \$2.5 million for the first part of the study, expected to begin by June, but required a match of about 30% from local governments. The match comes from the L.A. money and nearly \$500,000 provided by the city of Ontario and San Bernardino Associated Governments.

About \$12 million more is needed to finish the full review. It remains unclear where that money will come from, though SCAG officials say they believe that Washington will provide it.

Many transit experts say the maglev idea should be reconsidered or scrapped. Some say airports can be connected by improving Metrolink rail.

The maglev proposal clashes with plans by the state-backed

California High Speed Rail Authority to create a railway of European-style high-speed trains connecting Los Angeles and San Francisco. That plan is much further along, its environmental studies largely complete.

Both proposals envision similar Southland routes, running from Los Angeles to Ontario.

Perhaps the maglev train's biggest hurdle is history. For decades, planners and politicians in Los Angeles have touted grand solutions to traffic problems — air-cushioned trains, monorails, downtown people movers, trains running above the Los Angeles River or down freeways. Except for L.A.'s subway, none has been built.

Mark Pisano, executive director of SCAG, said maglev would break the pattern. "This one we have to have," he said.